

Dr. Gene Gelgelu, PhD (MBA)

President & CEO, African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) and Little Africa

I am honored to submit my candidacy for the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) Board of Directors. As a visionary leader, founder, and President & CEO of African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) and Little Africa, I bring over 25 years of experience in leadership, operational management, creative entrepreneurship, and creative placemaking. My work has been rooted in asset-based economic development, with a deep commitment to uplifting underserved communities through inclusive financial strategies.

Originally from Ethiopia, I have cultivated strong relationships with African immigrant and other communities across the United States. This cultural competency allows me to engage effectively with diverse populations, bridging gaps in access and opportunity. My academic background includes a Bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University, an MBA in Finance, and a Doctorate in Education Leadership from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. I am also a graduate of Harvard University's NeighborWorks Achieving Excellence Program.

My governance experience includes serving as a Planning and Human Rights Commissioner for the City of St. Paul, and on multiple CDFI boards. I am a proud Shannon Institute Leadership Fellow, Roy Wilkins Community Fellow, and Bush Foundation Leadership Fellow. Currently, I serve on the boards of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the African American Alliance of CDFI CEOs.

AEDS has been a longstanding member of OFN, serving low- and moderate-income African immigrants. I have attended OFN conferences for many years, and our team continues to benefit

from the knowledge and community they provide. Now, I am eager to give back to the organization that has helped shape our work and amplify our impact.

CDFIs share a common mission: transforming lives rather than building shareholder wealth. I am passionate about bringing the perspective of asset-based economic development to OFN's leadership and contributing to its continued success in advancing economic justice and opportunity.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.